

The Builder.

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QUIETLY and quickly the auditory of the Theatre Royal Drury-lane has been wholly re-decorated, affording us a fit opportunity to preserve for our readers a view of the interior of that building. As occasion offers we shall continue the series, with the addition, probably, of the plan of one or two of the most convenient and effective.

The present theatre was commenced, under the direction of Mr. B. Wyatt, on the 29th of October, 1811, and opened to the public on the 10th of October in the following year. Its predecessor, opened in 1794, was burnt down on the 24th of February, 1809.*

In 1822 the interior of the theatre was remodelled under the direction of Mr. S. Benxley, the architect, by the late Mr. Peto, for whom, if we remember rightly, the present Mr. Griswell had the general overlooking from first to last. The portico in Brydges-street and the colonnade in Russell-street were afterwards added.

In respect of the alterations, the account we have already quoted says:—"In its original state, as constructed by Mr. Wyatt, the auditory included three-fourths of a circle, the diameter of which, across the pit to the line of the breastwork of the dress-boxes, was 58 feet; and the extreme distance, from the front of the stage to the back wall of the boxes facing it, was 53 feet 9 inches. The present form, as designed by Mr. Benxley, is nearly that of the horse-shoe; the extremities converging from a semi-circle, of 51 feet 6 inches in the chord, into an elliptical curve, which decreases, from the above width, to 46 feet 6 inches at its termination near the stage: from the front of the latter to the dress-boxes, the extreme distance is 48 feet."

The following are some of the dimensions given:—

Span of the roof of the auditory between the extreme walls.....	ft.	in.
.....	77	5
Width of the proscenium in front.....	46	6
Iditto, at the curtain.....	40	0
Height of proscenium, to the centre of the arch.....	43	0
The extent of the stage, from the orchestra to the back wall, is.....	96	3
Width of stage from wall to wall.....	77	5
Height of the flats and side scenes.....	21	0

The plan is a parallelogram of 131 feet from north to south, and 237 feet from east to west, exclusive of scene rooms, which extend further eastward. The auditory is nearly in the centre: the entrance hall, lobbies, &c., are to the west, the stage to the east: the green rooms, &c., on the south side of the latter.

We may add, for it is worthy of note, that the staircases and approaches are fire-proof, and sufficiently spacious to contain as many persons as could at any time be within the theatre. Wyatt, in his "Observations on the Design, &c.," which he published, points this out, and alludes to the means they present to obviate the danger of an alarm of fire.†

Our engraving shows the present appearance of the house as seen from the stage; the

pit being boarded over for "promenade concerts," with which the theatre will open next week.* The decorations are simple, although exceedingly effective, and may be described in a few words. The ground of the whole is a faint blossom colour, approaching a white, and the ornaments, which are all *appliqué*, are gilt. To speak more in detail:—The fronts of all the boxes are laced with a trellis of large mesh, formed of an enriched moulding gilt, and upon this, festoons of detached flowers, very nicely modelled, also gilt, are suspended. On the dress boxes the festoons are looped through wreaths; on the next tier, getting lighter as they rise, they are tied with a gilt riband, and on the front of the third tier the festoon consists of riband only, instead of flowers. The fluted Corinthian columns which form the proscenium, two on each side, have their caps and bases gilt; the flutes, it will be remembered, are real apertures, to assist the view from the private boxes between them, and are entwined by a continuous wreath of flowers gilt, as are also the small columns which support the boxes throughout the house. The whole of the ornaments, fruit and flower work, are of *papier mâché*,—the ornamented moulding which forms the trellis being of a new patent machine-made kind,—and were made, gilt, and fixed, in five weeks, by Mr. Bielefeld.

The ceiling is painted to represent the sky seen from a roofless building, and much ingenuity is exhibited in the endeavours which are made to avoid those contradictions to the deception, which usually present themselves in such an arrangement. A continuation of the gilt trellis work, rising from the walls, forms an enclosure around the lower part of the circle (interfered with by the opening for the gallery), through which the atmosphere is seen. The central glass chandelier, a new one, made to present, by masses of drops, six flags, with the lines of the union-jack marked on each of them by light, is kept close up to the ceiling and is seen to be held by six flying cupids; a thick cup of glass covers the actual means of suspension, in order to prevent its interference with the illusion; with what success, however, we had not the opportunity of fully testing.

For colour, it will be seen, entire dependence is placed on the draperies, in respect of which Mr. Frederick Gye (by whom all the decorations have been arranged), has taken a bold step, which can scarcely fail to be successful. Acting probably on the proverbial partiality of the fairer portion of the British public for a red coat, he has adopted nothing more nor less for his draperies, than bright scarlet cloth, of which our army officers' uniform are made, with yellow edging, and which must produce a brilliant effect. He has not confined this to the private boxes, but by narrow valances under each tier has effectively tied the whole together. The inside of the boxes is lined with a yellow patterned paper on a crimson ground. We have only to add, further, that the series of what were called family boxes, at the back of the dress-circle, have been cleared away, so as to form an inclosed area, for the accommodation of a large number of standing spectators in the event of large audiences.

Shortly we shall have to speak of a similar work, which is being carried out in an entirely different manner, with what effect remains to be seen.

Coloured decorations are being extensively employed in private residences. Amongst the

most important mansions recently so adorned in the metropolis is Devonshire House, Piccadilly, where Messrs. Crace have been doing their utmost and with good result. The decoration here included the re-arrangement of the pictures in panels, so as to make them more entirely part of the room in which they hang.‡ In Paris, besides the Opera-House, of which we spoke last week, the *Théâtre Français* is being restored by M. Cicéri. The ceiling is being painted by M. Gosse. At the Chamber of Deputies great decoration is going on, and M. Horace Vernet is engaged upon the ceiling. Nor is decorative sculpture forgotten in the gay capital. The municipal council have voted the sum of 76,668 francs for four statues in stone, for the exterior of the Bourse, and five new statues are about to be placed in the grounds of the Luxembourg, namely, Marguerite de Provence, by Husson; Anne de Bretagne, by Debay; Anne de Beaujeu, daughter of Louis XI., by Gatteaux; Anne of Austria, by Ramus; and Marie de Medicis, by Callouet.

Apropos of decorations, however, our readers will hear with gratification and surprise that the Church of Santa Sophia, at Constantinople, which has been converted into a mosque since 1453, and is the most ancient Christian church that exists, is now undergoing a thorough restoration, by order of the sultan, under the direction of M. Fossati, an architect. As we are informed, they have removed the layer of plaster with which the superb mosaics and frescoes that decorate the walls were covered, and which are not less important as regards art than they are in respect of history.

"But Mr. Editor," says *Crito*, "you have quietly crept from the theatre into the church!" True, Sir, we bare, and a very proper order of proceeding too; but as the reverse of it might not seem so altogether unobjectionable to some, we will stop where we are, and say nothing more at present of the new decorations at Drury-lane.

ON THE CONSTRUCTION AND ARRANGEMENT OF PARSONAGE HOUSES.

By THE LATE MR. ALFRED BARTHOLOMEW.

It is of the greatest importance that the clergyman should reside among his flock, for nothing tends more to the moral elevation of a country parish than the having resident within it an affable man of education; by that education the superior of most; by his companionable cheerfulness the friend of the gentleman, of the yeoman, and of the cottager; by his station, and the gravity of his calling, lifted above all coarse and frivolous freedom; and by the blameless example of his life, which he dares not forfeit, exerting to decency of carriage. We can imagine no calling higher than that of the rural pastor.

If no suitable house be provided for the minister within the parish, much of that time which would be passed by him in comforting, advising, visiting, and aiding his parishioners must, of necessity, be wasted in the mere transit from his distant residence to his church, his time will be wasted in unprofitable labour, he will seldom be at hand when needed, he will be fatigued by unnecessary journeys, and little known to his parishioners, he will be considered almost as a stranger.

Without further preface, we proceed to the more immediate object of this essay, viz., the arrangement and construction of parsonage-houses.

In all parsonage-houses external stucco should be avoided. These domestic edifices, like the parish church, should be durable, and so as to suffer little decay within a considerable time, so that, as the emoluments derived from livings to which they are attached are generally of

* A costly marble staircase has recently been added to the house by the architect.

† The following paper, left by the late Mr. Bartholomew, was read by Mr. French at a meeting of the Trustees of the Church held on the 18th ult.